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Debate on the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019

*Excerpts of Remarks by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
during debate in the U.S. House of Representatives
on the Uyghur Human Rights
Policy Act of 2019
December 3, 2019*

Special thanks to the 128 bipartisan cosponsors of my bill, the [Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019](#), HR 649—comprehensive human rights legislation I introduced earlier this year with lead Democratic cosponsor Tom Suozzi of New York to address the massive crimes against humanity committed by the Chinese government against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

HR 649, which is nearly identical to legislation, [HR 7123](#), I introduced in the previous congress, would require the Administration to categorize and report on the human rights abuses being committed by the Chinese Communist government, take specific steps to sanction Chinese officials for these abuses, and stop to the greatest extent possible the Chinese government's efforts to create a high-tech police and surveillance state.

Despite an endorsement of our bill twelve months ago by the [Washington Post](#), which said: "This has become one of the world's most urgent human rights crises. Congress should pass the [Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act](#)," the Senate version is now before us today and I encourage my colleagues and the cosponsors of HR 649 to vote for it.

At a [2018 congressional hearing](#) Mihrigul Tursun recounted her ordeal with torture, sexual abuse and detention in one of China's "mass internment camps" in Xinjiang.

She broke down weeping telling us that she pleaded with God to end her life. Her Chinese jailers restrained her to a table increased the electrical currents coursing through her body and mocked her belief in God.

She was tortured simply for being an ethnic Uyghur and a Muslim in China.

There are millions of stories like this waiting to be told about the crimes against humanity being committed by the Chinese government against Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic Muslims.

Given that this year is the 30th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre maybe we should not be surprised by the cruelty and brutality of the Chinese Communist Party—but the size and scale of what is happening to Xinjiang is audaciously repressive, even by China's low standards.

- The mass internment of millions on a scale not seen since the Holocaust.
- Children ripped from the warm embrace of their families to be indoctrinated in Communist ideology and forced to renounce their religion, culture, and language.
- Rape, sexual abuse, and forced abortions of women being held in internment camps.
- Forced labor on a scale that allows Chinese companies to profit from modern-day slavery.

That atrocities such as these can exist in the 21st century is astounding and enormously sad.

We cannot be silent. We must demand an end to these barbaric practices and accountability from the Chinese government. We must say “never again” to the cultural genocide and the atrocities suffered by Uyghurs and others in China.

Chinese authorities initially denied the existence of mass internment camps and even now try to portray them as vocational training centers. They employed lies, censorship and economic coercion to stifle discussion of their crimes.

But documents obtained by the [New York Times](#) and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists have exposed the brutality behind Beijing's plans to radically and coercively transform the culture and religion of ethnic Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslims in China.

The leaked internal papers show detailed plans to intern between 1 million and 3 million Uyghurs in modern-day concentration camps--where they are subjected to severe human-rights abuses and Orwellian indoctrination efforts for those “whose thinking has been infected.”

At the same time, Beijing instituted plans to erase the influence of Islam in western China--bulldozing mosques and shrines, severely throttling all religious practice, and forcing camp detainees to renounce their faith.

The leaked documents also show that Xi Jinping himself directed the crackdown saying that the Communist Party must put the “organs of dictatorship” to work and show “absolutely no mercy” in dealing with Uyghurs and other Muslims.

In one speech President Xi said: “The weapons of the people's democratic dictatorship must be wielded without any hesitation or wavering.”

“In February 2017, he told thousands of police officers and troops standing at attention in a vast square in Urumqi to prepare for a “smashing, obliterating offensive.”

According to the documents, Communist Party officials who were reluctant to carry out Xi’s draconian policies were investigated and expunged—and worse. “Secret teams of investigators traveled across the region identifying those who were not doing enough. In 2017, the party opened more than 12,000 investigations into party members in Xinjiang.”

Xi Jinping has created one of the world’s worst human rights tragedies. He has implicated his government directly in crimes against humanity.

A reckoning is coming—but only if the international community will stand up to China.

Notably absent are voices from Muslim countries critical of China, perhaps because they place material gains from Belt and Road Projects above the fate of their fellow Muslims.

I want to commend the Trump Administration for its actions over the past several years. They have issued strong statements of condemnation, levied travel sanctions on Chinese officials, and [blacklisted 28 government agencies and businesses by placing them on the Commerce Department’s “Entity List.”](#)

The U.S. Commerce Department announced on October 7: *“Today, the Bureau of Industry and Security of the Department of Commerce announced that it will add 28 Chinese governmental and commercial organizations to the Entity List for engaging in or enabling activities contrary to the foreign policy interests of the United States. This action constricts the export of items subject to the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) to entities that have been implicated in human rights violations and abuses in China’s campaign targeting Uighurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).*

“The U.S. Government and Department of Commerce cannot and will not tolerate the brutal suppression of ethnic minorities within China,” said Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. “This action will ensure that our technologies, fostered in an environment of individual liberty and free enterprise, are not used to repress defenseless minority populations.”

These are important steps. This legislation takes the next step.

Chinese officials must be held accountable for crimes against humanity—including through Global Magnitsky and international sanctions and UN investigations.

Those who tortured Mihrigul Tursun should know that justice is coming for them.

Also, Chinese companies profiting from forced labor in Xinjiang should be prohibited from exporting goods to the U.S. and other countries.

The Administration has blacklisted one Chinese company for forced labor manufacturing, but there are many more companies, particularly in the manufacturing of cotton and garments, that are profiting off the slavery of detained Uyghurs. Many more companies need to be barred from entry in to the U.S. market.

Even in taking these steps, the problem goes deeper than mass internment, torture and forced labor. The U.S. has to address the high-tech authoritarianism of the future being auditioned in Xinjiang.

Beijing is using Xinjiang as a proving ground for an all-knowing police and surveillance state. The technology used to construct China's high-tech police state is being exported around the world—to Africa, Central Asia and beyond. Every petty-dictator and aspiring totalitarian can use this technology to crush democratic aspirations, religious freedom, and the rule of law.

The Congress and the Administration must work to counter this threat to US economic and strategic interests. American companies must not help create China's high-tech authoritarianism—the risk to innocent people everywhere and US national security is just too high.

Uyghur-Americans like Rebiya Kadeer, Nury Turkel, Rushan Abbas, and Gulchera Hoja have had their families threatened and detained because they dared to speak up.

So many Uyghur-Americans have experienced the pain of family detentions and disappearances.

For those watching us today. The message you hear should be clear. This Congress wants to hold the Chinese government and Chinese companies accountable for crimes against humanity and the cruelty they inflicted on your families and loved ones.

We will not be silent. Justice is coming. We will demand accountability—not only because it is the right thing to do, but because U.S. interests are threatened by China's high-tech authoritarianism.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the exemplary work of Radio Free Asia's Uyghur Service reporters. Despite threats and detentions of their families they kept working and provided us with an extraordinary record of atrocities. Their courage and professionalism are admirable, and they should be thanked.

Thank you, Chairman Engel, Ranking Member Michael McCaul, Asia, the Pacific and Nonproliferation Subcommittee Chair Brad Sherman and Ranking Member Ted Yoho for their deep and abiding commitment to the suffering people of Xinjiang.

I also want to note the contribution of Dr. Scott Flipse to the legislation before us today and to the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act. I also want to thank former CECC staff directors Paul Protic and Elyse Anderson and current staff members Jon Stivers, Peter Mattis, Meghan Fluker, and Amy Reger for helping this Congress shine a bright light on the atrocities being committed in Xinjiang.